

LOS ANGELES TIMES
10 January 1985

Classified Ads Part of Agency's Recruitment Program

Help Wanted: CIA Is Looking For a Few Good Agents

By WILLIAM DUNN, the Detroit News

DETROIT—"Unique overseas assignments that challenge your every talent," trumpeted your newspaper want ad. "You can forget about a 9 to 5 routine. You must be adventurous yet self-disciplined and tough-minded."

For starters, the ad was seeking applicants with college degrees, foreign language skills, knowledge of international affairs and a deep sense of patriotism.

The job? To spy for the United States of America.

The employer? The Central Intelligence Agency.

Incongruous as it may seem, the CIA now is running highly visible classified ads as part of a broad campaign to recruit personnel for overseas assignments, as well as analysts and technicians for domestic duty.

Ads Appear Regularly

The ads appear regularly in major magazines and newspapers. Such ads have run openly in large U.S. newspapers.

"We didn't use to have this high profile," conceded Larry Curran, chief of the CIA's recruitment operations division, in Langley, Va. "We've always had a lot of interest in the agency, (but) we wanted to broaden our base and reach more people. We did (through the ads) and it's proven to be a success."

The CIA first started running the ads five years ago. They are now a regular part of the agency's recruitment efforts, which also include recruiting clandestinely, staffing regional personnel offices to handle inquiries from the public, and sending representatives to colleges to answer questions and interview applicants.

Steve Gunn, personnel representative at the CIA's regional office in Cincinnati, reported that agency recruiters recently have visited such schools as the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Western Michigan University.

Visit Larger Schools

"Basically, our travel is to larger schools which have graduate-level programs that we might be interested in," he said. "We also have a lot of interest in engineering, so we go to schools that have graduate engineers."

While the arrival of CIA recruiters at colleges did spark a demonstration last fall at Brown University and some protests at the University of Michigan, Curran said, "Generally our reception is good."

The response to newspaper ads is also positive, according to Gunn. A recent ad in the New York Times brought 700 responses the first day.

"Advertising has increased the total inquiry level significantly,"

said Curran. He said the agency gets about 200,000 inquiries a year. Although noting that the number hired is classified, he said only a small fraction make it through the screening process.

Agency Not Growing

"We are not growing astronomically in strength," Curran said. "We are recruiting against retirement."

He said CIA staffing is at a lower level than during the Vietnam and Korean wars.

Unconfirmed reports place the size of the staff at around 18,000 during the last decade. One source, however, said he "heard that it edged up a few thousand, more like 21,000 or 22,000." That figure, he noted, does not include the CIA's countless free-lance contract workers and friends.

He maintained that one reason the CIA may be expanding is what he called the "information explosion." He explained: "There is just so much information available now. With computers and electronic advances, they need many, many people to process these tons and tons of data."

Between 15% and 20% of those applying or making inquiries about the agency are women, noted the CIA's Curran. The agency's newspaper ads note, "The CIA is an Equal Opportunity Employer."

Basic requirements, according to Curran, include "good character, flexibility, communications skills, international interest, government service or a desire for it, a willingness to relocate, U.S. citizenship, and the ability to pass a rigorous background investigation."

The agency currently seeks people to fill positions in several specific areas.

"The operations directorate is looking for young generalists who are going to be trained officers who will do overseas espionage," Curran reported. These are the James Bond types. This is one area where liberal arts majors with excellent academic records can find opportunities.

But covert espionage agents represent a minority of the CIA's staff or its recruits.

"About 80% of the employees are overt employees," Curran explained. They include translators and analysts knowledgeable about affairs in a particular country or region, to interpret and evaluate intelligence; engineers and scientific types, to develop instruments for intelligence-gathering and analysis; and "management types," to be personnel and administrative officers.

Unlike their undercover colleagues overseas, most of the overt CIAers work openly at agency headquarters in McLean, Va.

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